

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, and I will not object, but under my reservation I would be pleased to allow the chairman of the Committee on House Administration, the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS), the opportunity to explain the resolution.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HOYER. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

As was indicated, this is the use of the rotunda for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of NATO, and it is an especially important fiftieth anniversary because of the beginning of the expansion of NATO across what we used to know historically as the Iron Curtain.

□ 1615

It is, in fact, probably the best evidence we have seen of the reunification of Europe with the admission of the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Hungary and the Czech Republic.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, further reserving the right to object, I of course agree with the characterization of this resolution and would add, under my reservation, my own remarks that it is certainly appropriate that this House recognize and allow the recognition of NATO in the Rotunda.

NATO is one of the, perhaps, in fact the most successful alliance in the history of the world in terms of maintaining and keeping peace. There is certainly none that excel it. And I am pleased to join with the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMAS) in the support of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, but I will not object, I welcome this measure. Next week we will be privileged to host in Washington the 50th anniversary of our North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The Congress is honored to be able to play a part in these festivities.

The resolution will enable us to utilize the Rotunda to hold an appropriate ceremony in connection with this very important 50th anniversary commemoration. I urge my colleagues to support the resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

The Clerk read the concurrent resolution, as follows:

H. CON. RES. 81

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the rotunda of the

United States Capitol is authorized to be used on April 23, 1999, for a ceremony in honor of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and welcoming the three newest members of NATO, the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Hungary, and the Czech Republic, into NATO. Physical preparations for the ceremony shall be carried out in accordance with such conditions as the Architect of the Capitol may prescribe.

The concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECOGNIZING AND HONORING CREWMEMBERS OF U.S.S. "ALABAMA" AND U.S.S. ALABAMA CREWMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Mr. CALLAHAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services be discharged from further consideration of the resolution (H. Res. 123) recognizing and honoring the crewmembers of the U.S.S. *Alabama* (BB-60) and the U.S.S. *Alabama* Crewmen's Association, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Alabama?

There was no objection.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 123

Whereas the U.S.S. ALABAMA (BB-60) was a South Dakota class battleship that served first in the North Atlantic and then in the Pacific Fleet during World War II;

Whereas in the course of World War II, the crewmembers of the U.S.S. ALABAMA directly shot down 22 enemy aircraft;

Whereas the crewmembers of the U.S.S. ALABAMA earned the American Service Medal, the European-African-Middle Eastern Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with 9 Battle Stars, the Philippine Republic Presidential Unit Citation, the Philippine Liberation Ribbon, the World War II Victory Medal, and the Navy Occupation Service Medal;

Whereas the crewmembers of the U.S.S. ALABAMA were a courageous group, braving both the Arctic chill and the Pacific heat to help defend the Nation against enemy oppression;

Whereas many former crewmembers of the U.S.S. ALABAMA belong to the U.S.S. ALABAMA Crewmen's Association;

Whereas each year former crewmembers participate in an annual reunion to celebrate their shared service, memories, and friendship; and

Whereas more than 100 former crewmembers, along with family and friends, are expected to participate in the next reunion, which will be held from April 15 to 18, 1999, aboard the U.S.S. ALABAMA at Battleship Memorial Park in Mobile, Alabama: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives recognizes and honors the crewmembers of the U.S.S. ALABAMA (BB-60) and the U.S.S. ALABAMA Crewmen's Association for their valuable contributions to victory and peace in World War II and to the security and prosperity of the Nation.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF CONGRESS THAT GOVERNMENT OF FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA AND PRESIDENT MILOSEVIC RELEASE UNITED STATES SERVICEMEN AND ABIDE BY GENEVA CONVENTION

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on International Relations and the Committee on Armed Services be discharged from further consideration of the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 83) expressing the sense of the Congress that the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its President Slobodan Milosevic release the three illegally detained United States servicemen and abide by the Geneva Convention protocols regarding the treatment of both prisoners of war and innocent civilians, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, reserving the right to object, and I will not object, I yield to the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) for an explanation of the concurrent resolution.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution expresses the sense of the Congress that the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its President, Slobodan Milosevic, should release the three U.S. servicemen now in his custody. This certainly is an issue of the highest national concern, and our thoughts and prayers are with these brave individuals and their families.

I want to commend the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. NAPOLITANO) for bringing this measure forward at this time. This resolution duly states that the Yugoslav authorities are responsible under the Geneva Convention for the treatment of Staff Sergeant Christopher Stone of Smith's Creek, Michigan; Staff Sergeant Andrew A. Ramirez of Los Angeles, California; and Specialist Steven M. Gonzales of Huntsville, Texas.

Frankly, it is outrageous that Milosevic and his henchmen are toying with these soldiers, exploiting them for their own purposes and at the same time refusing to honor their commitment under the Geneva Convention to permit access of the International Committee of the Red Cross to verify that these men are not being mistreated.

The only photos that we have seen of these men since their abduction indicate that we indeed have cause to be highly concerned with regard to their well-being. The fact that our servicemen were engaged in a peaceful activity, ensuring the stability of the region